

## Placerita Canyon

December 9, 2009

Leader: Jan Gardner

Directions: Go up the I-5 to the SR-14 north. At about 3 miles on SR-14, take the Placerita Canyon off-ramp and turn right (east). At about 1.5 miles, the entrance to the Placerita Canyon Nature Center is on the right. Park in the main parking lot.

There are three main hikes we can do, which I'll call mild, moderate and difficult, and an optional add-on side trip to the waterfall, which can be done from any of the basic hikes.

Mild: Start at the Nature Center and walk the excellent and lovely trail upstream to Walker Ranch and return the same way. There are stream crossings; usually they don't amount to much, but if there's been rain they could be several inches deep. Distance: about 3.6 miles with about 300' gain. May also hike the waterfall trail, which starts at and returns to Walker Ranch.

Moderate: Walk the same trail upstream as above to Walker Ranch, then turn up the Los Pinetos Trail to the road at the top, use the restroom there and return the same way. This is a very pretty hike for the entire length. You DO NOT want to turn right and return on the Manzanita Mtn trail (the reverse of the Difficult hike) as you will be hiking downhill on close to 2 miles of loose, steep decomposed granite slopes. Distance: 8.4 miles with about 1700' gain. The nice thing is that the trail is gently upslope the whole way without any pesky ups and downs or steep areas. You may also add on the waterfall trail if you have time and energy.

Difficult: Start at the Nature Center parking lot and walk up the Manzanita Mountain trail. This trail is quite steep and follows the ridgeline up to a road at the top. The scenery is lush chaparral at the bottom, giving way very soon to low scrub and grassland. At the top, turn left on the road and hike about ¼ mile until you come to a restroom. Immediately turn left, (after pausing) down Los Pinetos trail, hike down to Walker Ranch and return to the Nature Center down the main trail along the stream. Distance: about 7.5 miles. I'm unsure about the total gain. The net gain is 1700' as in the Moderate hike, but there many sizeable ups and downs along the ridge trail, so total gain must be a few hundred feet more. You may also add on the waterfall trail if you have time.

Waterfall trail: This trail starts at Walker Ranch very close to the Los Pinetos trailhead. It's about a 1 mile round trip, with moderate gain.